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GURU GOBIND SINGH'S IDEALISM

BY

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GURU GOBIND SINGH'S IDEALISM.

BIRTH.

Guru Gobind Singh, dwelling upon the attributes of God, observes that different people describe Him differently just as their state of mental development enables them to comprehend Him. That is what he presumably meant when he said:—

"Men describe Thee, O'Lord, as their understanding tells them. The extent of Thy dominion and how Thou first established the Universe cannot be known."

The scholars of religious research will, I am sure, at once concede the truth of our Saviour's above saying. We all know that me[illegible] world, in all times and cli[illegible]e views of God. To so[illegible] and Protector, to others Av[illegible] and so forth. In a word the same God appears different to different

people. To speak the truth, the God, which men generally worship, is not the God who is Himself the Creator of the whole universe and is, Self-existent, All-powerful, and Self-evident, but the God who is made to appear as His worshiphers wish that He should do.

The case with Guru Gobind Singh is exactly the same. He is not understood or made to appear as he was or aimed to be; but as his biographers thought fit to describe him. He is generally believed to have been the Saviour of the Hindus, in whom he infused martial spirit and thereby enabled them to win back their lost political influence. This is no doubt an obsolute truth but certainly not the whole truth. In this sketch, an attempt is, however, made to depict the Great Guru as he has described himself in his autobiography—Vachitra Natak.

We are told by the Guru that Guru Tegh Bahadur, his father, was a recluse before he was proclaimed Guru by a Lobana Sikh at

the village Bakala in the Amritsar District. The disciples took him in procession to Amritsar for formal installation as Guru. The priests in-charge of the Amritsar temple, however, refused him admission and as, the opposition of the Guru's collaterals became more pronounced, later on, he purchased a piece of land, near Kiratpur, in the Hoshiarpur District, built a house for himself and a temple worsh[illegible] named the place Anandpur,—City of Joy—and began to live there in retirement away from the din and noise of the Punjab towns.

Unfortunately, however, even there, he was not destined to stay long and enjoy the peace he had sought.

Both Hindus and Mussalmans in those days had the greatest possible veneration for their holy men. In time of trouble they invariably sought the advice of their spiritual heads. The great generals even beli[illegible] presence of such holy pers[illegible], would, in itself, mean th[illegible] as with

some such belief that the Guru was invited to the country, now known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. But if this was the aim of the men who invited him there the Guru had a different aim altogether. In Delhi, Agra, Allahabad and even in the remote provinces of Bengal and Assam he converted a large number of men to his unitarian creed and ministered to them the solace of religion. At all these places now stand beautiful temples, from where, every morning and evening, the devout worshippers send forth in gratitude the offerings of their hearts for all the gifts the gracious Providence bestows on them.

According to Guru Gobind Singh, the subject of this sketch, Guru Tegh Bahadur and his beloved consort meditated on the unknown Creator and practised at-onement with Him in various ways, when, pleased with their devotions *Akalpurkha* commanded him who was then worshipping on the Hem Kund mountain with seven peaks, to the south of

Patna to take birth as his (Guru Tegh Bahadur's) son.

MESSAGE PROCLAIMED.

Such was he, whom we adore! What then his special message? The Guru himself gives a terse reply. Says he:—

"For this purpose was I born, understand all ye, pious people:

To inaugurate Righteousness, to lift up the Good,

To destroy all evil-doers root and branch."

Again he says:—

"Sin and suffering approach not those who meditate on Thy name, O'Lord. Those who give place in their minds to any other thought than that of the Lord, die wrangling."

This is the *sine qua non* of Guru Gobind Singh's teaching. And verily the one great Truth of Life is that, if we live in God,

all ills to which our flesh is subject, dare not come near us. Says Guru Ram Das in Rag Gauri Purbi to the same effect:—

"Those of us who are, *i. e.*, victims of self conceit, know not the taste of Hari's Nectar. There is in us the thorn of self-importance. It pricks us as we tread on the path of life, till as last we receive the cludgeon of the Angel of Death on our heads and thus our fights and squabbles over little things of this evanascent world come to an end, all of a sudden."

Again addressing the believer the Saviour says :—

"No sooner thou leavest this tenement of clay thy wife will flee from thee as if thou wert a ghost.

Sons, daughters, friends and companions all will direct thy removal forthwith.

All the manisons, lands and fortresses thou callest thine will cease to belong to thee when the breath of life in thee becomes extinct.

Remember thy Creator again and again, low brute, or in the end thou will depart alone, un-attended, and un-supported."

Says Guru Gobind Singh in Akal Ustat:—

"What if mighty emperors possessed rare, high-spirited, bright coloured elephants adorned with jewelry?

What if they owned numberless horses swift as the deer and which left even strong winds behind?

What if countless and powerful princes bowed low to them ceremoniously?

What if they attained such eminence?

In the end they left all these things here!"

Such then is the Guru's special message and is it right to regard him as simply a political deliverer of his people? Has a political adventurer or reformer ever spoken as Guru Gobind Singh speaks? Has a mere politician preached nothingness of what appeals

so much to most men and dwelt as forcibly on the vanity of human wishes ?

This calls to my mind a serious misconception about the mission of Guru Gobind Singh, I have read it and heard it stated that while Baba Nanak meant his followers to be quite peace-loving and peace abiding people Guru Gobind Singh turned them into a race of predatory adventurers who were out to rob other people's belongings. For this misconception I hold our own men responsible who act as interpreters to Western writers —who form their impressions without an intensive study of our Scriptures and of our history—on Sikh history. And it is regrettable that even such talented and high-famed Indians of the present day as Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatama Gandhi have taken the word of these European writers as gospel truth. Baba Nanak was not a dreamy idealist who would remain absorbed in meditation while his house was being set fire to and his sisters or daughters were violated. He was the first Indian who wrote a history

of his own times. In the *Ad Granth* we have the following hymns from his pen dealing with Babar's massacre of Saidpur, modern Amenabad:—

" The tresses that adorned the heads, and which vermillion parted, are now cut by shears, and dust hideth the neck whose seductive look had enthralled many a heart.

Ladies used to living in palaces know not where to lay their heads on :

On the day they were married, their bridegrooms looked so handsome besides them :

They were brought home in palanquins, carved with ivory :

Scents were sprinkled on them, and light shone from their shining garments :

A lac of rupees were presented to them on their first entry into their new homes, and another lac when they stood to take up the duties of their new position :

Coco-nuts and raisins were among the fruits that were served on their table, and they lent charm to the sofas they reclined on :

(Now) they are dragged with cords round their necks, and their pearl necklaces break,

Wealth and beauty that had brought them happiness, now turn enemies.

In obedience to his orders, the minions of the invader disgrace them and carry them off.

If people had given a thought to the future, why should they have been reduced to such a plight ?

The princes of India have lost their heads in the pursuit of love and pleasure.

Devastation and desolation follow the wake of Babar.

And babies have no mothers to feed them.

Mussalmans are not allowed time to pray and the Hindus to worship.

Men, who had neglected to remember *Rama*, are now refused the choice of professing faith even in *Khuda*.

Those who had fled returned to their lodgings and enquire about the dear ones they had left behind.

They find them not and congregate to lament and cry.

Where are the prancing steeds in the wilds and forests, and where the sounds of horns and bugles?

Where are the armoured cars and the red liveries?

Where are the looking glasses and the enchanting faces?

Where are the gates, mansions and palaces and where the pretentious inns?

Where are the soft beds and charming damsels at whose sight sleep vanished?

Where are the *pan* (betel) leaves and *pan* sellers, and the damsels with lips red like rubies? All have vanished from view!

It is this wealth that hath brought so much suffering. It is this wealth that hath caused so much loss.

Without sins wealth accumulateth not, and it beareth not company when one dieth.

Countless *Pirs* endeavoured to stop the *Mir's* progress, when they heard of his march against them ; but he came undaunted.

Private mansions and public buildings were set on fire, and children cried as they were flayed alive.

(Yet) no Mughal became blind. The incantations of the *Pirs* evidently did not prove efficacious.

In the contest between the Mughals and the Pathans, the former used powerful guns, and the latter brought furious elephants :

But the Indians had forfeited the Creator's sympathy, and they had to expiate their sins as they hid.

Of Hindu, Turk, Bhatti and Thakur women, veiled from head to foot,

Some are carried off, while others seek rest on the funeral pyre.

How can they pass their nights in peace whose dear ones do not return home ?

The Lord doth all this Himself or through His agents, to whom should one complain ?

Sorrow and joy come, as wilt by Thee, O'Lord ! where is one to go and cry ?

The Master is pleased when He seeth His orders carried out.

Sayeth Nanak, one receiveth what is ordained for him."

These are strong words and you will, I suppose, feel a bit surprised to find Baba Nanak--Apostle of Peace—using them. But I would like to tell you something more. This bloodshed and plunder roused an angry feeling in him, though of a passing nature and addressing the Divine, Father, he observed complainingly :—

> "Such an awful massacre and so much wailing and crying (and yet) Thou felt no pity ?"

Reader, you will, now agree with me when I say that in so far as the resistance to the forces of evil is concerned Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh saw things eye to eye.

Another instance of loose thinking is calling Guru Gobind Singh a Nationalist and a pioneer

of Nationalism. I cannot say how sad I feel when I hear even my Sikh brothers, both young and old, make such loose remarks. We make a serious mistake when we judge our holy men by our own standards and drag them into lend dignity to our warring passions for pelf and power at the expense of our neighbours. The Guru's outlook was not so narrow. He was a Humanist and his creed was Humanism to which he wished all men of whatever race or country to belong.

Says Guru Gobind Singh :–

"Temple and Masjid are the same,

Puja and Nimaz the same,

Men all, are the same, they only appear different,

Devas and Adevas, Yakshyas and Gandharvas,

Hindus and Turks derive their names from the countries they inhabit or from different fashions invogue there. Otherwise, thay all have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same tongue. Nay they are all alike in their composition, being merely an evolved

form of the combination of earth, air, fire and water." Again :

"The Easterns are abasorbed in contemplation of the Endless One :

The residents of Hingha and Himalyan ranges meditate on Him, and Ghors and Gardezis glorify Him.

Yogis practising yoga and numberless people living purely on air sing His praises. The Arabs of Arabia are seen worshipping Him.

The Fringis of France acknowledge Him, Khandharis and Kureshis do declare their faith in Him. And the Westerns of the West know their duty to Him." Similarly mentioning how good people and over other countries ennoble themselves by a communion with their Holy Father the Guru says in conclusion that "All who look upto the Lord attain full prosperity and just as a flower blossoms their hearths and homes become the abode of bliss and their lands and treasures bring in untold joy."

Such is the Saviour's message—a message of good will to all from a beneficent Provi-

dence that knows no destinctions. Prince and peasant, priest and layman, rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor are all clearly made to understand that no mediator is required to approach the presence of the Most High, that God is their own Father, ever-ready to take them into His embrace, that their is hope for everybody, even for the much contemned parrah, the fornicator and the harlot, that all this is needed to attain salvation is right thinking and right living with fear of God in the mind and love and sympathy for all creation in the heart.

Be, therefore, born of the Guru's spirit; be a part of his passion; pass mentally into his sacred presence. Then though obscure, unknown you will become social organs of a new Spirit-Life; then through you and such as you this ancient land will be blessed again; the Nation will be reborn; and the world will see India unveiled in her ancient Beauty unto the Glory of the One God whom sages call by many names.